

# SERVICE APPROVES TWO NONTOXIC SHOTS FOR WATERFOWL HUNTING

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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today gave permanent approval to shot formulated of tungsten, nickel, and iron for hunting waterfowl and coots, after toxicology tests showed no harm to birds that ingested the shot. In December, the Service also extended temporary approval of tin shot for the current waterfowl season.

The Service assessed possible effects of the tungsten-nickel-iron (TNI) shot, and determined that it is not a significant threat to wildlife. Hunters can use the new shot, marketed under the brand name HEVI-SHOT and manufactured by ENVIRON-Metal, Inc., of Albany, Oregon, for the balance of the current season and for all future seasons.

The International Tin Research Institute, based in Oxbridge, England, first applied for temporary approval for tin shot in 1998, and was given an extension of that approval in 1999. Preliminary tests showed no adverse health or reproductive effects on waterfowl exposed to tin shot.

"With these latest approvals, hunters have a choice of seven nontoxic shot types for waterfowl hunting during the current season. The Service remains committed to expanding hunter options, while also ensuring that approved shot types are safe for waterfowl populations," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark.

TNI shot joins steel, bismuth-tin, tungsten-iron, tungsten-polymer, and tungsten-matrix shot as permanently approved nontoxic shot types. Permanent approval of tin shot will not be given until the shot's manufacturer completes additional testing requirements.

Compliance with the use of nontoxic shot has been widespread since lead shot was banned for waterfowl hunting nationwide in 1991. The Service believes that compliance will continue to increase with the approval and availability of other nontoxic shot types.

"As new research shows, the ban on lead shot has been a tremendous boon for North American waterfowl. Hunters should know that by using nontoxic shot, they are helping to preserve our hunting heritage for future generations," said Clark, referring to a recent study that examined lead shot poisoning in waterfowl.

The study, "Ingestion of Lead and Nontoxic Shotgun Pellets by Ducks in the Mississippi Flyway," was published last summer in the Journal of Wildlife Management. Researchers found that the ban on lead shot reduced lead poisoning deaths of Mississippi Flyway mallards by 64 percent, while overall ingestion of toxic pellets declined by 78 percent over previous levels.

The report concluded that by significantly reducing lead shot ingestion in waterfowl, the ban

prevented the lead poisoning deaths of approximately 1.4 million ducks in the 1997 fall flight of 90 million ducks. In addition, the researchers state that approximately 462,000 to 615,000 acres of breeding habitat would have been required to produce the same number of birds that potentially were saved by nontoxic shot regulations that year.

Ducks regularly grub for food on the bottoms of lakes, streams and wetland habitat, and also ingest gravel that is used in the gizzard to help grind up food for digestion. They are therefore vulnerable to ingesting spent

lead pellets that settle on the bottom of waterways and wetlands. Ingestion of as little as one lead pellet may be enough to cause fatal lead poisoning in most ducks.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of 531 refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries, 64 fish and wildlife management assistance offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores

nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to State wildlife agencies.